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CHILD LABOR IN BELGIUM¹

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The industrial census of October 31, 1896, of which the complete results have just been published², furnishes the most recent and the most complete information regarding the extent of the industrial labor of children and the general conditions under which it exists.

Upon that date, out of a total of 671,596 laborers of all ages and both sexes, employed in the manufactures properly so called, and excluding the domestic workshops, there were 76,147 children less than sixteen years of age working in factories and workshops—that is to say, out of every 100 employees eleven were less than sixteen years of age.

The child labor was found principally:

- (1) In the textile industries 11,863.
- (2) In the mining industries 10,167, of whom 5,516 are employed in underground labor, and 4,651 in surface labor.
- (3) In the manufacture of clothing for men and women 9,674.
- (4) In the glass industries 4,429.

Among 4,681 establishments and contractors employing both adults and children, and having at least ten employees: 1,737 (37.1 per cent) employed less than 10 per cent of children along with adults; 1,675 (35.9 per cent) employed from 11 to 25 per cent of children along with adults; 821 (17.3 per cent) employed from 26 to 50 per cent of children along with adults; 361 (7.9 per cent) employed from 51 to 100 per cent of children along with adults; 87 (1.8 per cent) employed more than 100 per cent of children along with adults.

There are, hence, in eighty-seven establishments more children than adults. These concerns belong chiefly to the textile industries (26), to the tobacco industries (10), books (8), clothing (7), manu-

¹ Translated from the French by D. E. Martell, Ph. D., late Fellow in Romanic Languages, University of Pennsylvania.

² Eighteen volumes published by the Minister of Industry and Labor (Brussels, 1900 and 1901). We draw the greater part of these references from "General Statement of Methods and Results of the Census" (Brussels, 1902), which this publication completes.

facture of chocolate (6). One woolen mill and two dressmakers employ only children.

The statistics of the children according to age is as follows:

Number of children aged less than sixteen, 76,147—50,493 boys, 25,654 girls; number of children from fourteen to sixteen, 54,946—36,431 boys, 18,515 girls; number of children from twelve to fourteen, 20,762—13,814 boys, 6,948 girls; number of children less than twelve, 439—248 boys, 191 girls. About one-half of these children less than twelve years old belong to the manufacture of clothing (dressmakers and cutters).

The census has succeeded in determining the length of actual labor (recess deducted), for 61,652 children employed in the industrial establishments, not including the coal mines. Rather more than one-tenth of them (about 7,000) work nine hours and less. One-third (about 21,000) work about ten hours. One-third (about 19,000) work about ten and a half to eleven hours. One-fourth (about 15,000) work more than twelve hours. The days of more than eleven hours are most frequent in the textile and clothing manufactures.

Under the head of time of labor: 61,314 children (38,414 boys and 22,900 girls) work during the day only (92.99 per cent); thirty-six children (boys) work only at night (0.02 per cent), 4,611 children (4,238 boys and 373 girls) work alternately by day and night (6.99 per cent). The majority of these night laborers are employed in the glass industries, viz.: 3,262. Then comes the iron industry with 657 children, and the confectionery factories with 447.

Regarding the coal mines, the duration of labor has been determined for 9,153 children out of 10,167. Among these 9,153 children, 7,772 work during the day only (5,550 boys and 2,222 girls); 4,482 (3,281 boys and 1,201 girls) work ten hours and less; 2,855 (1,900 boys and 955 girls) work ten to ten and a half hours; 308 (246 boys and 62 girls) work ten and a half to eleven hours; 127 (123 boys and 4 girls) work more than eleven hours; 4,827 boys and 9 girls work underground. Working only at night are 1,357 boys (no girls); and in gangs 24 boys. Almost the whole number of the "underground" boys work about ten hours or less, between the descent and the ascent.

One of the great merits of the Belgian industrial census of 1896 is the particular care which was taken in gathering exact

statistics regarding the individual wages of the whole of the working population. The statistics of the wages of the Belgian workmen, by their completeness and exactness, are certainly of the best existing to-day. They have succeeded in ascertaining the wages of 70,688 young workpeople (45,577 boys and 25,111 girls).

Number of children working by the day: with wages less than 0.50 fr., 17,229 = 24.37 per cent; 7,511 boys (of which 2,844 receive no pay); 9,718 girls (of which 6,141 receive no pay); from 0.50 to 1.00 fr., 21,192 = 29.98 per cent; 12,748 boys and 8,444 girls; from 1 to 1.50 fr., 19,723 = 27.91 per cent; 15,090 boys and 4,633 girls; 1.50 fr. and over, 12,544 = 17.74 per cent; 10,228 boys and 2,316 girls.

In round figures one may say that one-fourth of these young employees earn nothing or less than 0.50 fr.; a little more than half earn from 0.50 to 1.50 fr.; and less than one-fifth earn more than 1.50 fr. In fact about two-thirds of the latter earn from 1.50 to 2 fr., and one-third from 2 to 2.50 fr. These percentages relate to the entire number of children, and would be modified somewhat if the boys and girls were considered separately. The figures also show that smaller wages are paid for female than for male labor.

The Law of December 13, 1889

The statutes affecting child labor in industrial establishments have been under consideration in Belgium since 1843. At that time an investigation conducted by the government unveiled the unfortunate and often abusive conditions under which child labor was conducted, and a scheme of very remarkable legislation was drawn up by M. Ducpetiaux, chairman of the Investigation Commission.

But this project was premature. Manchesterian ideas were still the prevalent ones in the country and with the government. Reform was still to be waited for, for almost a half-century longer, in spite of the repeated efforts of divers groups of enlightened manufacturers, of physicians, of philanthropists. All these united efforts succeeded simply in causing to be introduced into the royal decree of April 28, 1884, containing regulations concerning the working of mines, an article, No. 69, which forbade boys aged less than twelve, and girls less than fourteen, to be allowed to labor in the mines.

The industrial troubles of 1886, and the efforts of the Labor Commission instituted the same year, prepared at last the solution to the question, and led to the law of December 13, 1889, upon the labor of women, of youths and of children in industrial establishments.¹

This law placed under restrictive measures the labor of children:

- (1) In mines (coal and metal), quarries, stoneyards.
- (2) In works, mills and factories.
- (3) In establishments classified as dangerous, unhealthy or unsuitable; as well as in those where steam boilers or machine motors were used.
- (4) In harbors, terminals and stations.
- (5) In transportation by land or water.

It applied both to public and private establishments, even when they were of an educational or benevolent character. By virtue of this provision the law regulated, for example, the labor performed by children in the reform schools, in the lace-making schools, etc.

The law did not affect the family workshops, where only the members of a family are employed, under the authority of either the father, the mother, or the guardian; providing, however, that these workshops were not classed as dangerous, unhealthy or unsuitable,² or that work therein was not performed with the aid of steam boilers or machine motors.

It also did not affect, according to the admitted official interpretation, other workshops which could not be regarded as mills or factories, or which are not classed among the dangerous, unhealthy or unsuitable establishments. Hence, the greatest portion of the clothing factories, which employ a great deal of child labor, escaped the application of the law.

The principal legal provisions applying to children and youths of less than sixteen years are the following:

¹ A penal law of May 28, 1888, relative to the protection of children employed in the itinerant professions, forbids the feats of strength and dangerous exercises, inhuman, or of a nature to affect the health of children and youths under eighteen, employed by those who carry on the profession of acrobats and mountebanks, etc.

² There exists a special regulation which puts under authorization and special watchfulness those industrial establishments, which, by their nature, threaten the safety, health and convenience of the public, or offer certain dangers to the health and safety of the workmen who are employed there. These establishments are known as "Classified Establishments."

(1) Prohibition to employ at labor children under twelve years of age (Art. 2).

(2) The King can prohibit, or only authorize under certain conditions, the employment of children and youths under sixteen, at labor that is beyond their strength, dangerous or unhealthful (Art. 3).

(3) The length of the working day is twelve hours at the most, divided by recesses, the total of which shall not be less than one and a half hours.

The King has the authority to regulate the length of the working day, as well as the length and the conditions of recess, in accordance with the nature of the occupations in which the children are employed, and the needs of the industries, professions or trades. (Art. 4).

(4) Night labor, that is to say, labor after nine o'clock in the evening and before five in the morning, is prohibited to children and youths under sixteen (Art. 6).

Exceptions. (a) The King can authorize the employment of children at night, at occupations which, by reason of their nature, cannot be interrupted or retarded, or which cannot be accomplished except within a definite period.

(b) As relating to labor in mines, the King can authorize night labor by a certain class of workmen more than fourteen years of age, also by male children fully twelve years old, to begin their labor at four a. m. (c) The governors of provinces, acting upon the report of the inspectors of suitable labor, can authorize night labor for children and youths, in all industries or trades, in cases of delay resulting from unavoidable necessity, or in exceptional circumstances. This authorization cannot be granted for more than two months at most; but it can be renewed. It must be approved by the Minister.

(5) Children and youths under sixteen cannot be employed at labor more than six days in the week (Art. 7). This regulation provides for the Sunday holiday, but the legislation of 1889 did not intend expressly to forbid Sunday labor. Indeed in 1889 the point was discussed whether the Belgian Constitution (Art. 15) did not oppose the legal prohibition of Sunday labor. Even to-day the question is still in controversy. Hence the law of 1889 solved the difficulty by merely forbidding children to labor more than six days in the week. In fact Sunday, the seventh day, is the day of

rest. There are, however, certain *Exceptions*: (a) As regards the industries in which labor, by reason of its nature, cannot stand either interruption or delay, the King can authorize the employment of children over fourteen, during seven days in the week, whether permanently or temporarily, or conditionally. They must, however be granted, in every case, the necessary time to devote to their religious duties once a week, as well as one complete day of rest in fourteen.

(b) In case of unavoidable necessity, the inspectors, burgomasters and governors can, with respect to the industries, authorize the employment on the seventh day of children and youths under sixteen.

(6) In order to facilitate the enforcement of these legal provisions, children and youths over sixteen must carry a memorandum book, which is to be given them gratis by the parish administration; and which must contain their Christian and surnames, date and place of their birth, their residence, and the full names with residence either of their parents or guardians. Likewise the heads of the industries, chiefs or managers, must keep a registry of the same information that appears in the memorandum books (Art. 10).

The Belgian laws, in their principal provisions which we have just examined, resemble for the most part the laws regulating child labor in other countries. But there is a gap which must have struck the reader, viz.: the absence of provisions for the education of children. Foreign laws, and notably the German, English and French laws, require that the children, whose industrial labor is effectively regulated, should devote to attendance at school the time which they do not spend in the factory or workshop. This is done in the interests of their welfare and for their intellectual and moral development. The legislator only imperfectly fulfills his mission when he confines himself to preventing and repressing the abuses of industrial labor.

This defect in the Belgian law is due to the opposition that compulsory education has met with and still meets among a notable part of the population and among the majority in Parliament.

In order that the statement of legislation may be complete, the author has collected in a table the provisions of the royal decrees which have resulted from Articles 4, 6 and 7 of the law, and which concern the determination of the duration of daily labor and the conditions of recess in a number of industries (Art. 4); the

exceptions to the prohibitions of night labor (Art. 6), and the authorizations of work on the seventh day (Art. 7). (See page 210.)

Art. 3 of the law gives the King the power to prohibit or to regulate the labor of children or youths under sixteen, in certain industries particularly unhealthful or dangerous.

The royal decrees of February 19, 1895, August 5, 1895, and April 5, 1898, have applied this legal provision in the following manner:

(1) Prohibition of labor of children and youths under sixteen in sixty-five industries, enumerated in Articles 1 and 2 of the decree of February 19, 1895. These industries are, for the most part, the chemical ones, or those which manufacture injurious products.

(2) In the lucifer-match factories:

(a) The labor of children and youths under sixteen is prohibited where paste containing white phosphorus is made, or in the factories where matches dipped in such paste are dried. Such labor is also prohibited where matches are dipped in white phosphorus.

(b) Children under fourteen may not be employed in filling boxes with white phosphorus matches (Article 3 of the royal decree of February 19, 1895).

(3) In factories where india-rubber is treated with carbon sulphuret, the presence and the labor of children and youths under sixteen are prohibited (Art. 4 of the same decree).

(4) Art. 6 enumerated a series of industries in which certain places are closed to children and youths under sixteen, because of the injurious and unhygienic character of the labor performed there. Art. 7 prohibits the admission into certain places and labor therein of children under fourteen.

(5) The royal decree of August 5, 1895, regulates the employment of children in rag-shops.

(6) Finally, by force of a royal decree of April 5, 1898 (intercalated into the decree of February 19, 1895, Art. 5) it is forbidden to employ children and youths under sixteen in all places where the treatment of hare and rabbit skins is performed; in all places where the hare and rabbit skins are prepared before the treatment; also in all processes which the skins undergo after the treatment, carrying, brushing, cutting.

In order to give a full account of the extent of the regulation of child labor in Belgium, it was necessary to consider in detail the

INDUSTRIES.	LENGTH OF LABOR AND CONDITIONS OF RECESS. (Art. 4 of the law.)	NIGHT LABOR (Authorization provided by Art. 6 of the law.)	LABOR ON THE SEVENTH DAY. (Authorization provided by Art. 7 of the law.)
I. Spinning and weaving of flax, cotton, hemp and jute (royal decree of December 26, 1892).	For children and youths of 13 to 16 years: 11½ hours a day, 3 recesses of a total of 1½ hours at least. The recess at mid-day to be at least 1 hour. For children of 12 to 13 years, 6 hours a day; recess ¼ hour.		
II. Woolen industry (royal decree of December 26, 1892).	For children and youths under 16: 11¼ hours a day. Recess as in No. I.		
III. Newspaper printing (royal decree of December 26, 1892).	For children and youths under 16: 10 hours a day. Several recesses with a total of 1½ hours at least.		
IV. Art industries (royal decree of December 26, 1892).	As for No. III; but for type foundries, the labor of children under 16 is limited to 8 hours a day.		
V. Manufacture of paper, (royal decree of December 26, 1892).	For youths of 14 to 16: 10 hours a day. Length of recess: 3 recesses with a total of 1½ hours at least. For children of 12 to 14: 6 hours a day. Recesses: one or more with a total of ½ hour at least.	Authorization for young men of 14 to 16. The length of night labor and recesses is the same as for day labor.	

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| <p>VI. Tobacco and cigars (royal decree of December 26, 1892).</p> | <p>For youths of 14 to 16: 10 hours a day. Recesses: 3 with a total of 1½ hours at least. For children of 12 to 14: 6 hours a day. Recesses: one or more with a total of ½ hour at least.</p> | <p>Authorization for youths of 14 to 16. The same conditions of labor and recess as for day labor.</p> |
| <p>VII. Manufacture of sugar (royal decree of December 26, 1892).</p> | <p>For children and youths of less than 16: 10½ hours a day. Recesses: 3 with a total of 1½ hours at least.</p> | |
| <p>VIII. Furniture and industries pertaining to shipbuilding (royal decree of December 26, 1892).</p> | <p>For children and youths under 16: 9 hours a day during the months of October to March, and 10 hours a day during the rest of the year. Recesses: 3 with total of 1½ hours at least. The recess at mid-day shall be 1 hour at least.</p> | |
| <p>IX. Pottery and crockery-ware (royal decree of December 26, 1892).</p> | <p>For children and youths under 16: 10 hours a day. Recess as No. VIII.</p> | |
| <p>X. Refractory products (royal decree of December 26, 1892).</p> | <p>As for No. IX.</p> | |

INDUSTRIES.	LENGTH OF LABOR AND CONDITIONS OF RECESS. (Art. 4 of the law.)	NIGHT LABOR. (Authorization provided by Art. 6 of the law.)	LABOR ON THE SEVENTH DAY. (Authorization provided by Art. 7 of the law.)
XI. Glass industry (royal decree of December 26, 1892).	As for Nos. IX and X.	Authorization of night labor, <i>for the glass-tapping</i> , to boys of 14 to 16. The same conditions of labor and recess as by day.	One week in every two, the boys of 14 to 16 can be employed a seventh day <i>at the glass-tapping</i> . On that day the actual labor must not exceed 6 hours, with a recess of $\frac{1}{2}$ hour for rest, and the time necessary for their spiritual devotions.
XII. Lucifer matches (royal decree of December 26, 1892).	For children and youths under 16: $10\frac{1}{2}$ hours a day. Recesses: 3 with a total of $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours at least. One hour at mid-day. During these recesses the workmen leave the premises.		
XIII. Ship-building industry (royal decree of December 26, 1892).	For children and youths under 16: 8 hours a day during the months of November to February, and 10 hours the rest of the year. Recess: 1 hour during the first months, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours during the others.		
XIV. Zinc rolling mills (royal decree of December 26, 1892).	Children from 12 to 14: 5 hours a day. Recess of $\frac{1}{2}$ hour at least. Youths of 14 to 16: 10 hours. Recesses with a total of $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours; noon recess at least 1 hour.	Authorization for youths of 14 to 16. The same conditions of labor and recess as by day.	
XV. Crystal and goblet fac-	For children and youths under 16,	Authorization for youths	One week in every two,

ories (royal decree of December 26, 1892)

XVI. Industries pertaining to clothing (1st category: hosiery, lace, embroidery, tulles and blond lace, wool-braid, etc.). (royal decree of December 26, 1892).

XVII. Industries pertaining to clothing (2d category: tanning, currying, tawing, cordwaining, hat-making, fine linen, toilet and millinery, etc., in so far as the law of December 13, 1889, applies to the establishments where these industries are performed), (royal decree of December 26, 1892).

who work at glass-making: 10 hours and 20 minutes. Recesses: 3, one of 20 minutes at least, in the morning; one of ½ hour at least, at noon; a third of 20 minutes at least, in the afternoon.

For children and youths under 16: 11 hours. Recesses: 3 with total of not less than 1½ hours. The mid-day rest shall be at least 1 hour.

For children and youths under 16, it must not exceed 10 hours a day. Recesses with a total of at least 1 hour. During these recesses the workmen shall be at liberty to leave the premises.

of 14 to 16. The same conditions of labor and recess as by day.

the youths of 14 to 16 may be employed a seventh day at the manufacture of glass tiles and other analogous labor, which settled glass demands. On that day the actual labor shall not exceed 6 hours, with a recess of ½ hour at least, and the time necessary for their spiritual devotions shall be provided for.

INDUSTRIES.	LENGTH OF LABOR AND CONDITIONS OF RECESS. (Art. 4 of the law.)	NIGHT LABOR. (Authorization provided by Art. 6 of the law.)	LABOR ON THE SEVENTH DAY. (Authorization provided by Art. 7 of the law.)
XVIII. Bulky mechanical construction (royal decree of December 26, 1892).	Children of 12 to 14: 10 hours. Youths of 14 to 16: 11 hours. Recesses with a total of 1 hour at least.		
XIX. Small mechanical construction (royal decree of December 26, 1892).	In a first group of industries in this branch (Table A), the length of labor of children 12 to 14 shall not exceed 10 hours. For youths of 14 to 16: 11 hours. In the trades enumerated in Tables B, C, D, children and youths of less than 16: 10 hours. Recesses with total of 1½ hours at least. One hour at noon. Free exit from the premises.		
XX. Bricks and tiles "hand-made," and other similar employments (royal decree of September 22, 1896).	Children and youths under 16: 12 hours a day. Recesses: if the actual day's labor exceeds 8 hours: 3 recesses with total of 1½ hours at least, at noon. If actual labor exceeds 6, but not 8 hours: 1 or more recesses with total of 1 hour at least. A recess of ¼ hour at least is obligatory after each 4 hours of labor.		
XXI. Window-glass industry; basin kilns; dry-	For children and youths under 16: 10½ hours. Recesses with total	Authorization for youths of 14 to 16. The same	One week in every two, youths of 14 to 16 can

ing ground; pot kilns (royal decree of December 31, 1892).

XXII. Mining and quarrying (royal decree of March 15, 1893). N. B.—For the coal mines of Mariemont, where the organization of labor is different from that of other coal mines, the royal decree of March 15, 1893, provides a special regulation.

XXIII. Manufacture of coke (royal decree of March 15, 1893).

A. Ovens for common coke.

B. Coke ovens for the recovery of by-products.

of 1½ hours. Each period of labor shall be followed by a complete rest of a duration double that of the labor itself.

In underground labor, the length of stay, descent and ascent comprises, among children and male youths under 16, 10½ hours. Recess: at least ¼ of the stay underground. Male children 12 years old may be employed underground after 4 a. m., under the same conditions of labor and recess. For surface labor, the length of labor for children and youths under 16 is 10½ hours. Recess, 1½ hours at least.

Children and youths under 16: 10½ hours. Recess not less than 1½ hours. The principal recess 1 hour.

Children and youths under 16: 10½ hours a day. Recesses with total of 1½ hours. Principal recess 1 hour.

conditions of recess and labor as by day.

Authorization of night labor for male youths of 14 to 16 occupied in cutting out and maintaining the roads and filling up the dumps. Length of labor 10 hours, and recess as by day.

A. One week in every two, authorization to work a seventh day, for male youths of 14 to 16. Day's work 8 hours, less the recess of 1 hour and time for religious devotions.

For male youths over 14, authorization for night work. Same length and recess as by day.

B. Same authorization as for No. XXIII A.

be employed the seventh day.

INDUSTRIES.	LENGTH OF LABOR AND CONDITIONS OF RECESS. (Art. 4 of the law.)	NIGHT LABOR. (Authorization provided by Art. 6 of the law.)	LABOR ON THE SEVENTH DAY. (Authorization provided by Art. 7 of the law.)
XXIV. Factories for the agglomeration of coal (briquette factories), (royal decree of March 15, 1893).	Children and youths under 16: 10½ hours. Recesses: a total of at least 1½ hours. Principal recess 1 hour.		
XXV. Quarries and works connected with them (royal decree of March 15, 1893).	For underground labor, the same conditions as for No. XXII. For surface labor: 10 hours. In the tool repair shops: 10½ hours. Total recess 1½ hours. In the works for cutting and carving the rough products of the quarry: for children and youths from 12 to 16: 8 hours a day, in order to give time for professional instruction.		
XXXVI. Metallurgic works governed under the law of April 21, 1810. (Blast furnaces, iron and steel mills, rolling mills, foundries, etc.), (royal decree of March 15, 1893).	Length of labor: 10½ hours a day. Total recess: 1½ hours. Principal recess: ½ hour between 11 and 2 o'clock for the furnace men; 1 hour for the other workmen.	Male youths of 14 to 16 years may work at night, under the same conditions of labor and recess as the day labor.	One week in every two , male youths of 14 to 16 may work a seventh day, in order to feed the blast furnaces and attend to the zinc foundries. Time allowed for religious devotions,

XXXVII. Preserving and pickling of fish (royal decree of November 3, 1898). Children and youths under 16: 11 hours. Recesses: 3 with total of 1½ hours when actual labor exceeds 8 hours. When it exceeds 6, but not 8 hours, one or several recesses with a total of 1 hour. A recess of ¼ hour is compulsory after each period of 4 hours' labor. Authorization for youths of 14 to 16 to work from 9 p. m. until midnight, during a number of days which shall not exceed thirty a year. Actual labor may never exceed 12 hours. Recesses as by day.

XXXVIII. Factories for enamel products (royal decree of November 29, 1898). Boys of 14 to 16 may be employed at night, one week out of every two, in the work of the enamel cooking ovens. Length of labor and recess as for No. XIX.

law of 1889 and the provisions of the various decrees of which we have just spoken. Let us see now how the law and the regulations are applied:

The Application of the Law.

In order to insure the application of the law and to watch its execution, Article 12 prescribes the appointment of officials by the government, whose powers shall be determined by royal decree.

At first the inspection of labor was vested in officers already charged with other powers. This system, condemned by experience in other lands, did not give good results, and a special body of labor inspectors was organized by a royal decree of October 22, 1895.

According to this decree, the inspection of labor and the observance of the execution of the law of 1889 in the mines, quarries and metallurgic works is committed to the engineers of the mines. For all other industries, the service of labor inspection is attached to the Labor Bureau.

This service comprises:

(1) Inspectors of labor in the central administration, residing at Brussels. These officers are six in number: two inspectors-general, three labor inspectors and one female inspector.

(2) Inspectors and deputies residing in the country. There are actually eight labor inspectors in the provincial service and six deputies. The country is divided into nine districts, and the departments of inspection have, on the last occasion, been defined by a ministerial decree of December 16, 1899.

(3) Finally, a certain number of medical inspectors are charged specially with watching over the application of the rules with reference to the healthfulness and safety of the workshops.

The labor inspectors not only have charge of the execution of the law of 1889, but also of the laws on the payment of wages, the regulations of factories, etc. They make an annual report, and their reports have been published regularly since 1895, and from them information must be secured concerning the law's execution, even though the reports are often incomplete and unmethodical.

I will refer here particularly to the last report published, that of 1900:

The law of 1889 was not applied seriously until 1895, following the reorganization of inspection. Since then progress has been

made, but it is incontestable that in several of its provisions the law is not applied as it should be in all parts of the country. The press and Parliament¹ have several times pointed out this unsatisfactory situation.

The inspectors certainly perform their complicated and delicate work with fidelity. But they are too few in number to fitly discharge their numerous duties. The opposition or the ill-will of the manufacturers is still too frequent; and when the inspectors wish to apply the law and enforce its respect, they do not always find the support which they should have among their superior officers.

In certain industries, *e. g.*, glass and hand-made brick, which employ a considerable number of children, the application of the law is particularly to be desired. It is true these industries have peculiar economic characteristics. There has already been introduced a regulation less severe for the brick-works, and certain mitigations are being asked for the glass industry.

Too many children are still permitted to labor before having reached the legal age of twelve years. The inspector for the district of East Flanders (Ghent) announces that the number of children under twelve found in the industrial establishments was particularly numerous in 1900. He found seventy-five such in his district in ten hosiery factories, two tobacco factories, one lace-making school, one mechanical weaving mill, one jute mill, one sugar refinery. (Report 1900, pp. 88, 89.) In some other districts the situation is better, according to this report, but almost everywhere violations are still observed, as well as the complicity of parents. "Families in need often make all efforts and use all sorts of devices to cause their children under age to be admitted to labor." (Report, p. 143.) It happens that the regulation note-books requiring the entry of the child's age contain false declarations, or they are delivered to the children under age by the civic authority. (Report, p. 127.) Moreover, these note-books are often missing, and the registries which the masters should keep do not always come up to the demands of the law.

A royal decree of December 26, 1892, as we have said, organizes the system of half-time—six hours of work—for children of twelve to thirteen, employed in the textile industries other than the woollen industry. This system has not given good results.

¹ See particularly the discourse of M. Renkin, Catholic Deputy of Brussels, proceedings of June 13 and July 2, 1901.

The manufacturers prefer to do without children under thirteen, rather than adopt this special organization. In the works which have adopted this system, the child does not benefit from it at all. "After having worked six hours in the morning at the spinning or weaving of linen, the parents send that child to complete the day's labor at a chairmaker's, at picking rags, or in a preserved fruit and vegetable factory, where the law does not protect him any longer within the same limits. Moreover, if he does not work in the afternoon, he roams around the streets and becomes vicious, the school refusing to admit as pupil a child who can only attend half the time." (Report, p. 65.)

This confirms what was said above, concerning the defect in the Belgian law, which contains no regulations for the instruction of children whose labor it limits.

On several occasions the labor inspectors have called attention to the necessity of extending the application of the law to the workshops which are not included, and especially to the clothing and millinery shops, which freely employ numerous children. They ask, in every case, that the legislator should state more clearly and precisely than the actual interpretation of the law does, the distinction between the workshops subject to the law and those that are not. (Report, pp. 3, 66.)

Finally, the inspectors think that it is necessary to revise and to simplify the royal decrees, the complications of which give rise to many difficulties. This revision is, by the way, at present under consideration. (Report, pp. 3, 44.)

From what precedes, we may conclude that, except certain desirable ameliorations and simplifications, Belgium possesses a law comprising what is needed for the protection of children employed in the industries, and a law regardful of the many interests of industry. The most important present problem is to secure general, strict and complete execution of the legal provisions. Nothing is more demoralizing, from the social point of view, than to possess laws to which officials either cannot or will not compel obedience.